

# Survey shows people want their friends to be vicious to their enemies

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A small team of psychologists from Oklahoma State University, the University of Texas at Austin and Hamilton College, all in the U.S., has found through a survey that people generally want their friends to be

nice to them but also want their friends to be vicious in dealings with their enemies. The results are published in the journal *Evolution and Human Behavior*.

Prior research has suggested that most people prefer that their [friends](#) treat them kindly—and some research has also suggested that some people might prefer their friends to be less than kind to their enemies. In this new effort, the research team surveyed people in the U.S. and India about what they expect from their friends.

The [surveys](#) were designed to probe the feelings of respondents regarding the types of behavior they like to see in their friends. To that end, they asked questions regarding exploitive [behavior](#), viciousness, indifference, kindness, trustworthiness and also the degree of similarities, familiarity and impartiality during conflicts between enemies. They then sent the surveys in six waves to people in student and non-student environments in both the U.S. and India, and they received 1,183 responses.

The researchers found that as expected, most respondents wanted their friends to be nice to them. Most of them also wanted their friends to be nice to other people—except when one or more of those other people were enemies of their own. If they had an enemy, they wanted their friends to treat them as enemies, as well, or in some cases, to treat them worse.

The researchers suggest that people wanting their friends to share their [anger](#) or hatred toward a foe is not surprising; this finding fits with theories surrounding "deeply strategic social cognition"—in which people choose friends based at least in part on whether they will band together with them against potential enemies for protection.

**More information:** Jaimie Arona Krems et al, Sometimes we want

vicious friends: People have nuanced preferences for how they want their friends to behave toward them versus others, *Evolution and Human Behavior* (2023). [DOI: 10.1016/j.evolhumbehav.2023.02.008](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.evolhumbehav.2023.02.008)

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